CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE

INVENTORY OF HISTORIC RESOURCES: A METHODOLOGY

by

BROOKE ABBRUZZESE

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Dr. Gordon Matzke

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CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE
INVENTORY OF HISTORIC RESOURCES: A METHODOLOGY

ABSTRACT: This paper describes a methodology developed for an inventory of historic resources. Citizen participation is the key element. An information network, designed to elicit local impressions of important sites and buildings and the historic themes they represent, is analyzed. This methodology is compared with previous studies to show that the views of citizens are essential to a meaningful inventory.

INTRODUCTION

A survey of the historical resources in Benton County, Oregon, was conducted under the direction of the County Planning Department and the Oregon State University (OSU) Department of Anthropology (Fig. 1).[1] The study was made between September of 1979 and August, 1980, and was designed to meet the objectives of the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC). All areas of Benton County outside the Corvallis city limits were included.

In 1974, LCDC adopted a set of "State-wide Planning Goals and Guidelines" to guide local governments in the development of comprehensive land use plans. Goal number five addresses the conservation of "open space, scenic and historic areas, and natural resources;" it mandates that

lands with historic areas, sites, structures, and objects shall be inventoried by counties. Another LCDC goal requires that local governments "develop a citizen involvement program that ensures the opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process."[2]

The National Register of Historic Places is the federal agency responsible for classifying historic resources and for setting goals and standards for their preservation. The survey methodology recommended by The National Register begins with a literature search from which a map is prepared. Buildings and sites are located and then researched and evaluated according to established criteria.[3]

LCDC's goals require a more popular approach and shift the focus of historic preservation from the national to the local level. These goals are sensitive to the role of man in shaping his landscape, stating that "the general public . . . should have the opportunity to be involved in inventorying, recording, mapping, describing, analyzing, and evaluating the elements necessary for the development of the plans."[4]

A methodology for the Benton County inventory was planned to satisfy the LCDC goal of citizen participation. Planning Staff time and funding for the project were limited; the problem of identifying new sites and buildings required expediency in planning. The main strategy used for the survey was the interviewing of county residents. Local people are an important source of information; they identify sites

which otherwise might be missed. Also, buildings that are perceived locally to be important probably generate the greatest community support for preservation.

This paper describes the use of a local information network as a primary data source. The project should be considered a starting point for acquiring new information. The results of this endeavor are compared with information gathered in previous studies using other techniques.

Location of Benton County
in Oregon

Figure 1
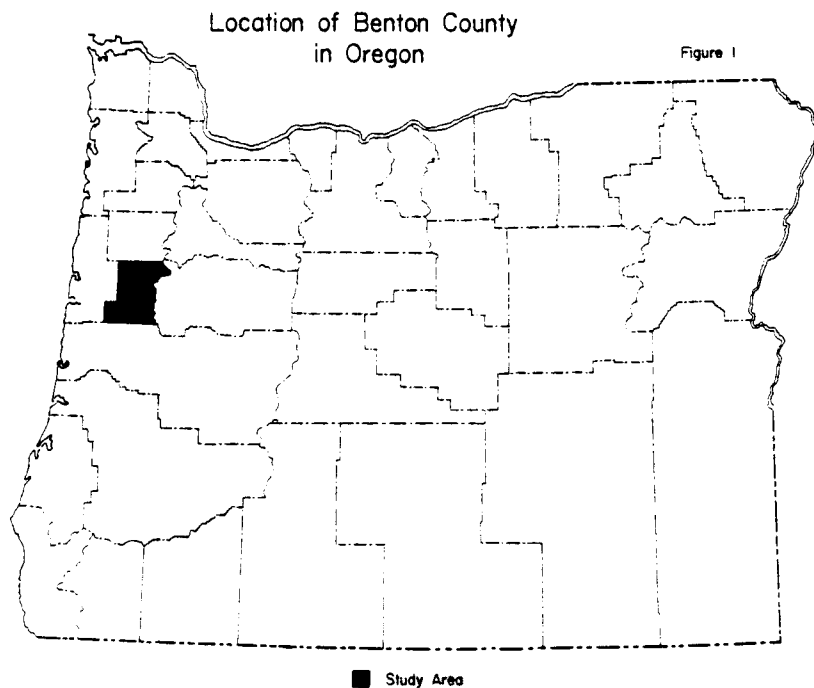
■ Study Area

Figure 1   Study Area

Previous Studies

There were two previous county-wide compilations of historic resources. In 1903, J.P. Huffman, architect, prepared a map of structures, showing their use.[5] The map indicates potential historical sites and permits comparison with the historical themes chosen for the 1980 survey.

In 1976, Stephen Dow Beckham, of Lewis and Clark College, conducted a preliminary historic resource inventory of the entire state to serve as a foundation for LCDC planning. The inventory followed National Register guidelines, including a thorough literature search, interviews with county residents, and a "windshield survey." Beckham's study is a reference point for comparing methodologies and the rate of loss of historic buildings.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF BENTON COUNTY

A review of the history of Benton County may shed light on the attitudes of its people today toward certain historical themes. The recent beginning of the county's history is its most remarkable feature.

Written records indicate that in 1811, explorers associated with the Pacific Fur Company had penetrated what is now Benton County. White settlement dates to the 1840s. The local Indians, tribes of the Kalapooian family, were quickly subdued, and, in 1856, they were removed to the Grande Ronde Reservation.

Pioneers settled first in the northern part of the county, gradually filtering down to the south. William Bowen notes that by 1850, settlement of the county was dominated by mid-westerners who, especially in rural areas, tended to cluster together according to blood ties. "Immigrants settled among their own kind, often recreating culturally distinct neighborhoods similar to those from which they had come."[6]

Benton County was created by the territorial legislature

in 1847. The first county courthouse was built in 1855 and was replaced with the present structure in 1889. Marysville, later named Corvallis, was the territorial capitol for a brief period in 1855 and was a busy shipping center. The gold rush in California and southern Oregon created a need for food and merchandise; many of these goods were produced in Benton County and shipped south from Marysville.

Transportation is an important aspect of the history of Benton County; people were separated by long distances. The old Indian trails leading to the coast and traversing the county from north to south were used as wagon roads by trappers and settlers. Road construction began in 1851. Land transportation was supplemented by steamship on the Willamette River until after the turn of the century. With the advent of the railroad in the 1870s, travel on the land improved.

Benton County has always had a strong rural backbone; its farmers have made an important contribution to the economy and politics. The early settlers raised livestock and grain. The main field crop was wheat, easily transported and exchanged, and was considered "legal tender" for debts.

The earliest industrial enterprises focused on the immediate needs of the settlers for food and shelter. Grist mills and sawmills appeared in the 1840s and '50s. By 1900, the industrial pursuits of the county had diversified. An article in a 1905 Corvallis paper, "Industry and Resources of Benton County," enumerated the following:[7]

Six flour mills with a combined capacity of 650 bbls.;
eight to ten saw mills; one sash and door factory;
one ice factory; one furniture factory; one organ
and carriage factory; one hardwood manufacturing plant
which manufactures wagon gearing supplies and also
300 carloads a year of hardwood lumber; excellent
transportation facilities by rail and river boats;
and a large and growing trade with Alaska, Spanish
America, and the Orient.

Community development has been an integral part of Benton
County history. Religion and education were as basic and
essential to the early settlers as flour and sawed lumber.
The early churches and schools ensured the continuation of
values of the social order left behind and served as
community centers.

Two major institutions of higher learning have flourished
in Benton County. Philomath College was built under the
auspices of the United Brethren Church in 1867 and functioned
until 1929. The building now stands as an historical land-
mark. Oregon Agricultural College, now Oregon State
University, was created by the 1862 Land Grant Act "to
teach such branches of learning as are related to agri-
culture and the mechanical arts, in order to promote the
liberal and practical education of the industrial classes
in the several pursuits and professions of life."[8]

METHODOLOGY

An extensive bibliography was compiled so that buildings

and sites could be researched in the future. Written records provided an outline of historical themes pertinent to Benton County (Appendix A).

The interested public was invited, through the media, to attend four meetings of the Planning Department; professional and lay people participated. The purpose of the project was explained and the 1976 inventory shared with the group. Volunteers were asked to help in the locating of additional historical sites and buildings and to provide the names of local historians. From these meetings, a list of potential informants was developed, covering as much of the county as possible. Historic structures found along county roads had been photographed for identification during the interview process.

Interviews

A letter of introduction, including the outline of historical themes, was sent to about forty informants. Twenty-one of these people were interviewed, either by phone or in person. A few sent information to us by mail.

The interviews were unstructured and open-ended, concentrating on four general questions: 1) Do you know of sites and structures in your community related to the historical themes? 2) Do you have, or know of, written or photographic records concerning the sites and structures? 3) Do you know of other people who can furnish information? 4) Which historic buildings (or sites) would you like to see preserved? People were asked, also, to identify photos.

Ground Survey

A second ground survey made it possible to locate and photograph most of the resources mentioned in the interviews. In many cases, the local historians came along to show the way. The address, surroundings, condition, and architectural style of the buildings were noted.

Mapping and Data Compilation

The historical resources were mapped to show location and historical theme represented.[9] For comparison and future research, the sites on the 1903 county map and in the 1976 inventory were mapped in the same manner. In order to avoid possible inconvenience to property owners, the locations of the resources are considered confidential; they are shown in this discussion under "Results" only by theme. Interested persons may contact the Benton County Historical Society for further information.

The interview notes were analyzed. Data on the number of new names and the amount of new information gathered at each meeting or interview were compiled. The number of buildings representing each historical theme was tabulated for comparison with the 1903 map and the Beckham study.

RESULTS

Introduction

In this survey, information about historical resources was derived from local people by a cumulative discovery process. The methodology included public meetings, inter-

views, and a ground survey. As mentioned earlier, the survey procedure recommended by The National Register, and used by Dr. Beckham, commences with an extensive literature search. To compare the two approaches, this presentation of research results focuses on the cumulative discovery process, the distribution of newly discovered resources, and the historical themes represented by the sites.

Characteristics of Cumulative Discovery

The discovery process included interviews with enough people to indicate patterns of information accretion. When time permitted no further interviewing, a discrepancy emerged between two kinds of incoming information. The number of potential informants appeared to be limited (Fig. 2); the amount of information about resources seemed to be indefinite (Fig. 3).[10]

In the first several meetings, the request for names of local historians was very fruitful. A network of knowledgeable people emerged which covered most geographic areas of the county. Later, the number of new names quickly dropped off; duplication of names already mentioned in previous interviews began to appear. Names of those who could supply information only about known sites were recorded for future reference but are excluded in the graph, since it deals only with methods of identifying new sites. After the fifteenth meeting, no new names were mentioned (Fig. 2). This may indicate that there were few, if any, additional people who could serve as sources of general information.

figure 2

New Names of Key Informants

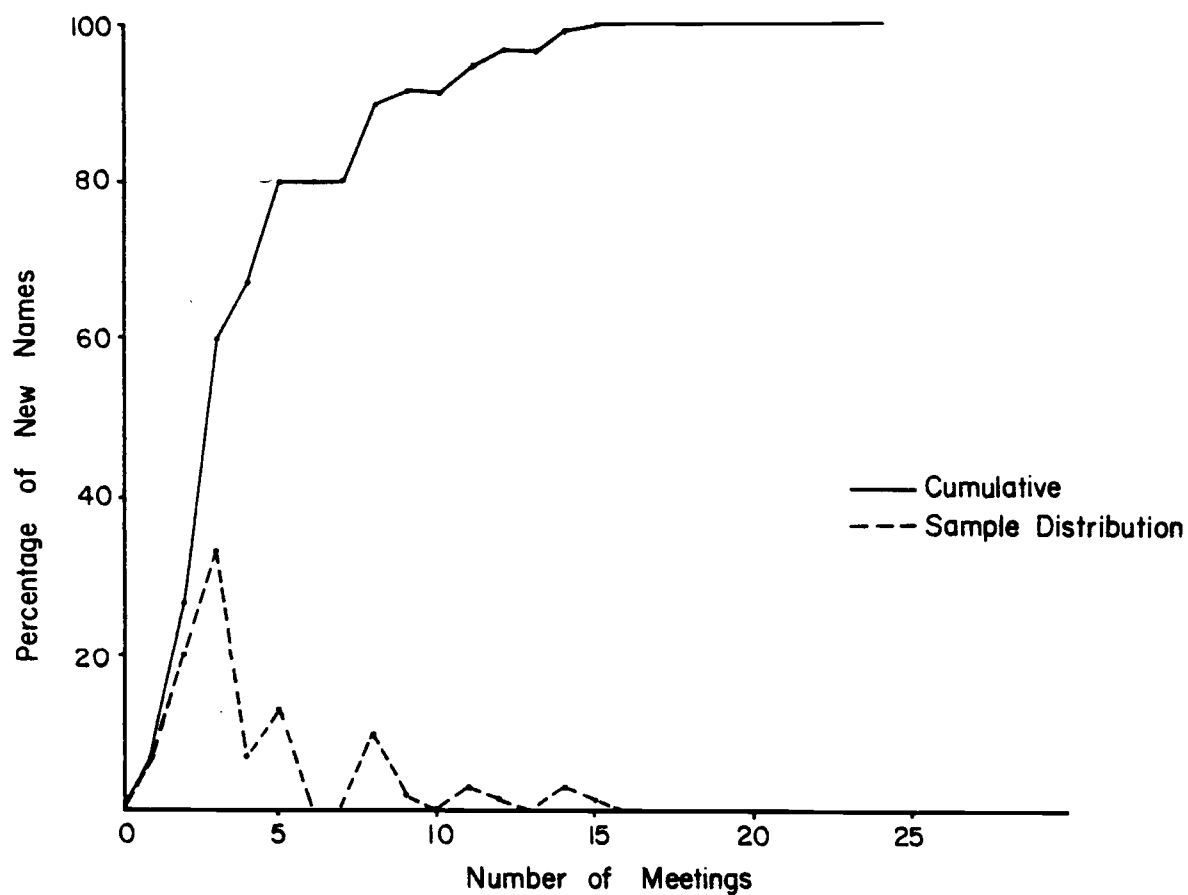Figure 2 New names of key informants. Dotted lines represent the percentage of new names given at specific meetings; the solid line shows the cumulative percentage.

figure 3

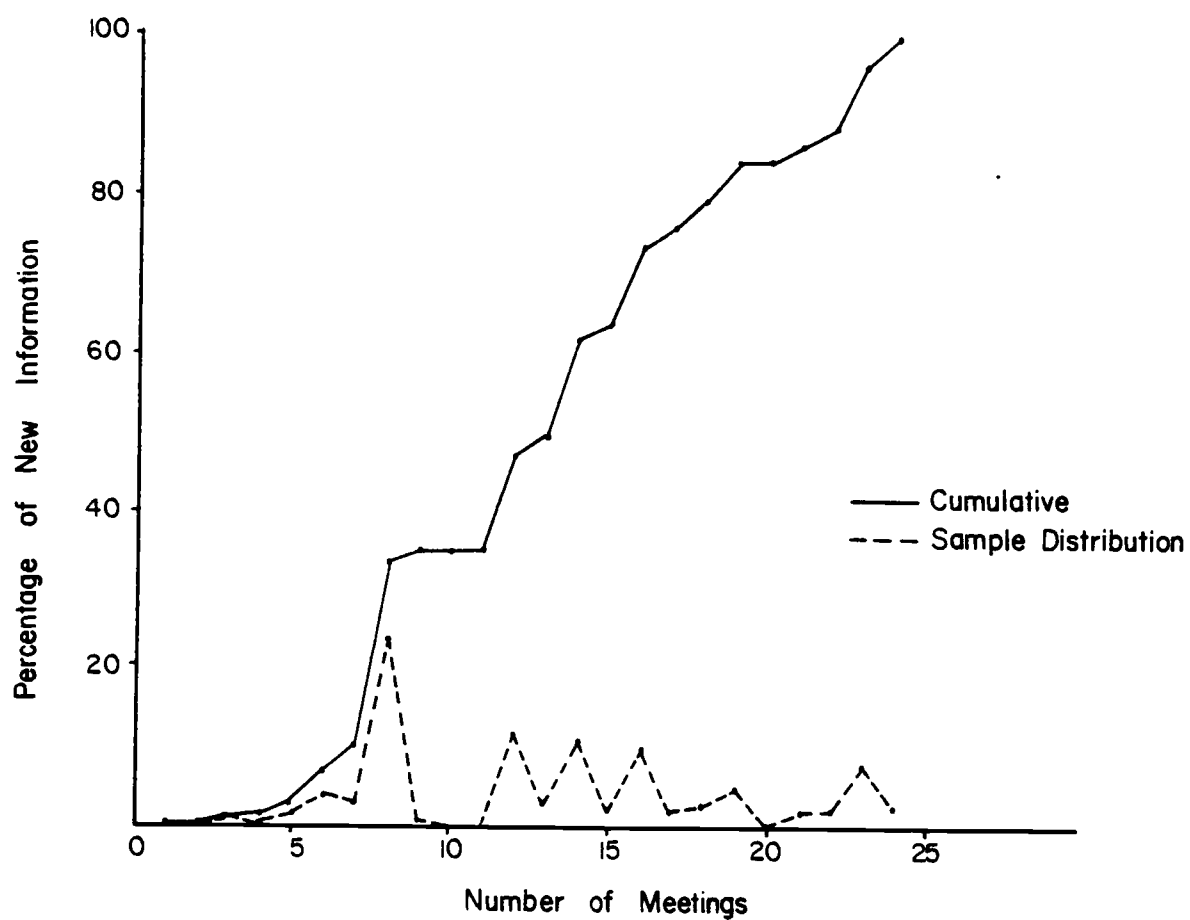# New Information on Sites and Buildings

Figure 3. New information on sites and buildings. The dotted line represents the percentage of new information given at specific meetings; the solid line shows the cumulative percentage.

All of the people interviewed by Dr. Beckham were included in the current information network. However, many others, interviewed for this study, had not been consulted previously. The reason for this may be that Dr. Beckham interviewed people at or near known sites, which he had identified through a literature search. My list of informants was accumulated as a result of public meetings.

The pattern of new information accumulation for historical sites and buildings is quite different from the pattern of acquiring new informant's names (Fig. 3). The first few meetings yielded very little information. The reason for this is unknown, but it is thought that people feel more comfortable, in a public setting, about giving names of other people as being "local experts" than posing as such themselves. When the more intimate interviews began, the quantity of information increased; fluctuations in the number of new sites and buildings mentioned depended on the wealth of knowledge of the informant. Many duplications of information did occur throughout the interviews, but at no time was it decided that the locations of all the historic buildings and sites had been discovered. The number of buildings depicted on the 1903 map alone (295) points to a wealth of possibilities for future research.

Forty-six new historic sites and buildings were recorded for the state register as a result of my discovery process (Fig. 4). Many other resources were mentioned, but time limitations did not allow for their documentation. A list

was prepared for the Planning Department of buildings that informants would like to see preserved. The list includes sites both in my inventory and in Dr. Beckham's (Appendix B).

Distribution of Recorded Resources

Maps showing the location and theme of the historical resources recorded in 1976 and in 1980 indicate certain features and biases inherent in the respective methodologies (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5). The distribution and density patterns of each inventory partially reflect the historic settlement pattern as shown on the 1903 map. However, in both inventories, the quantity and location of resources depend primarily on the knowledge of the local informants.

Dense concentrations of resources are mapped in areas where informants were prolific. For example, compare the northwest quarter of the county on each map. The abundance of sites on the 1980 map is mostly the result of an interview with one descendant of pioneers of the King's Valley area, Leone Lyday. In contrast, the 1976 map shows a greater concentration in the southwest area, around Alsea. According to the 1976 inventory, this is due, in part, to Dr. Beckham's interview with Mr. Rufus Hayden. Although our network divulged Mr. Hayden's name, it was not possible to reach him for an interview.

The difference in emphasis between the rural and urban sector in the two inventories is important. Of course, the 1980 inventory is biased in favor of the small town and rural parts of the county, because the Planning Department

figure 4

Inventory of Historical Resources in Benton County

Legend

△ Schools

□ Residences

○ Government

◇ Transportation

● Cemeteries

◆ Commerce

† Churches

■ Industry

▲ Agriculture

Kings Valley

Wells

Summit

Lewisburg

Albany

Wren

Corvallis

Philomath

Inset A

Alsea

Bellfountain

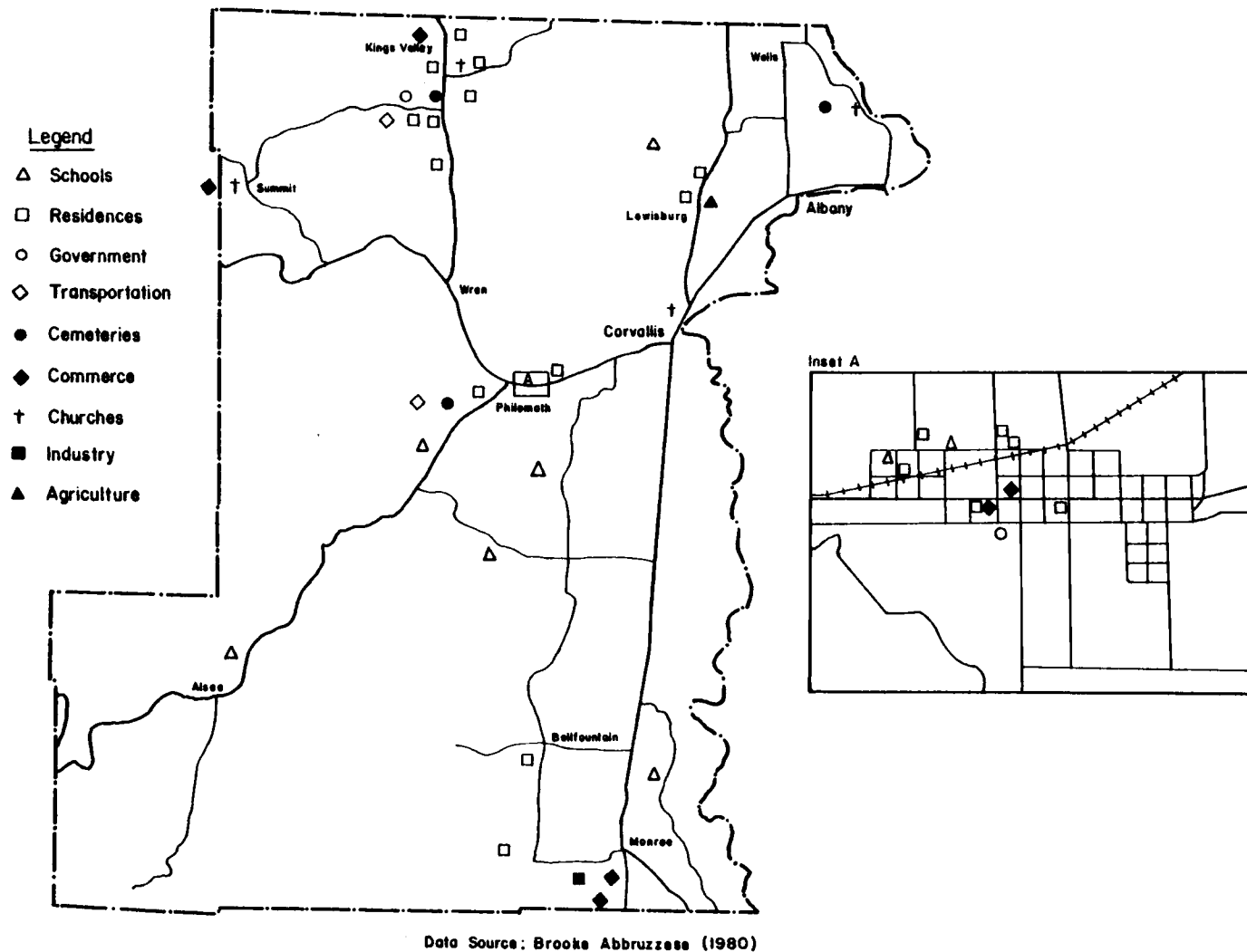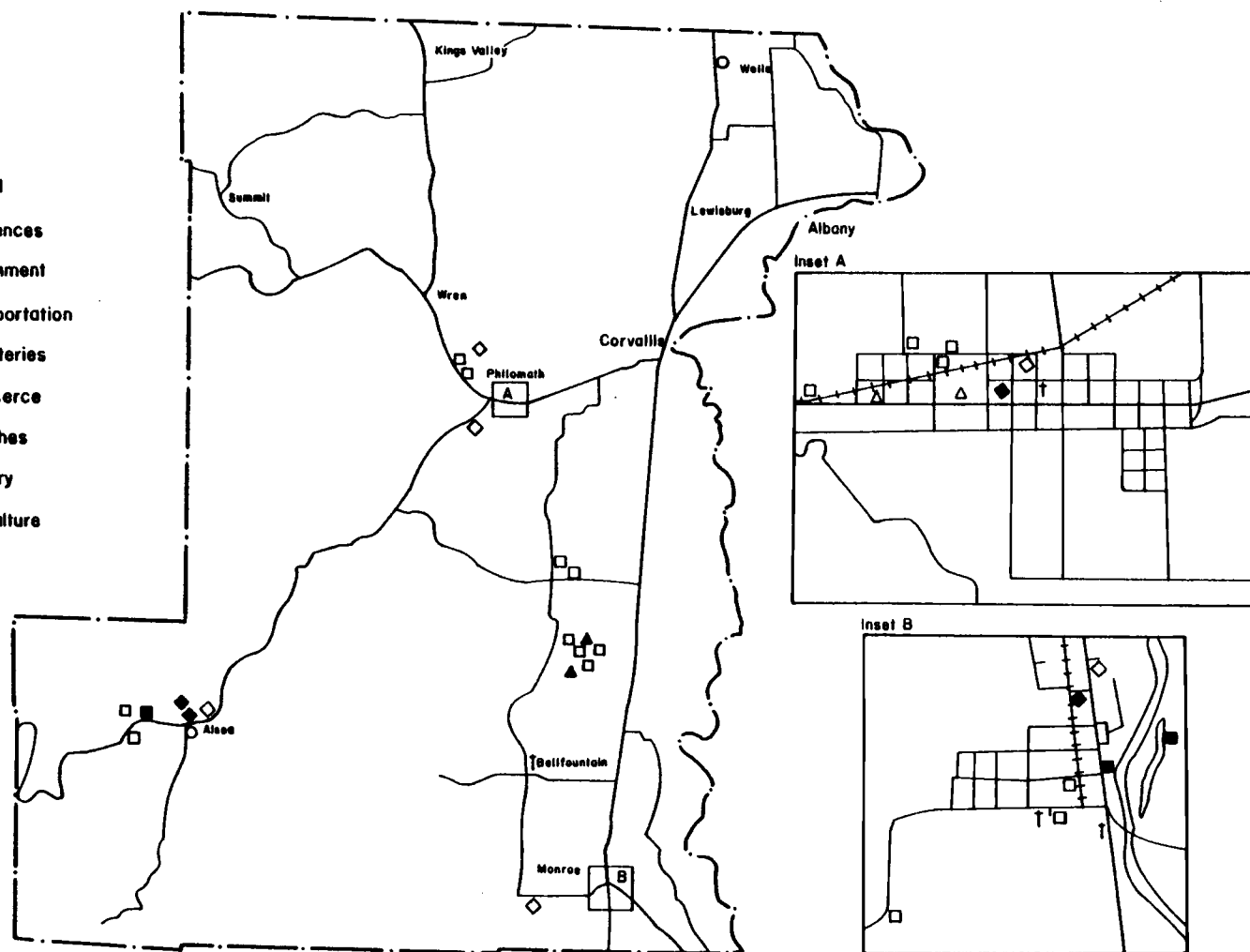Monroe

Data Source: Brooke Abbruzzese (1980)

Fig. 4 Abbruzzese inventory of historical resources (1980), based on interviews.

figure 5

Inventory of Historical Resources in Benton County
(Excluding Corvallis)

Legend
△ School
□ Residences
○ Government
◇ Transportation
● Cemeteries
◆ Commerce
† Churches
■ Industry
▲ Agriculture

Kings Valley
Wells
Summit
Lewisburg
Albany
Inset A
Wren
Corvallis
Philomath
A
Alsea
Bellfountain
Monroe
B

Inset B

15

Data Source: Stephen Dow Beckham (1976)

Fig. 5 Beckham inventory of historical resources (1976), based on literature search.

excluded Corvallis from the study. But the 1976 inventory
has a strong urban bias which may not accurately reflect
Benton County's settlement and development. Of the seventy-
three sites recorded in 1976, forty-eight percent are in
Corvallis and sixty-eight percent are in either Corvallis
or Philomath.

The present population of Benton County totals 71,300,
with 41,750 in Corvallis and 2,400 in Philomath.[11] With
sixty-two percent of the population in the urban nucleus,
the rural element appears relatively unimportant. However,
data from the U.S. census records do not show a predominance
of population in Corvallis and Philomath until after the
turn of the century. Early census figures are confused by
the changing size of the county; before 1893, Benton County
was several times its present size. Even in 1900, the pop-
ulation of Corvallis and Philomath made up only thirty
percent of the total county population.[12] Since the average
date of construction for buildings in both inventories is
around 1885, it seems logical that a historic resource
survey should reflect a rural, rather than an urban bias.
Possibly the urban emphasis of the 1976 survey can be
attributed to methodology. The historical literature, the
initial source from which a site list was compiled, was
probably generated mainly from an urban point of view
and reflects an urban orientation.

Historical Themes Represented by Sites

Of the forty-eight themes outlined at the beginning of

the project, ten have importance for Benton County as
reflected in the historic sites identified by local residents.
These choices generally concur with the themes indicated in
the 1976 survey and the 1903 map (Table 1 and Figs. 4 and 5).

Table 1.--Historical Themes Represented by Sites

Themes	Abbruzzese	Beckham	1903 map
Residences	22%	47%	69%
Schools	20	6	15
Churches	8	11	1
Industry	8	8	4
Agriculture	4	6	1
Commerce	8	6	0
Transportation	8	11	5
Water Systems	4	0	0
Cemeteries	8	0	2
Government	4	6	2

Apparently, non-residential sites are more prominent in
the minds of the local historians than they are in historic
literature and maps. But even in the 1980 survey, residences,
such as "Alpine House" (ca. 1852) of Senator Sewall Hawley,
are revered for the pioneer spirit they represent (Fig. 6).

Also loved are the houses of settler families who provided
focal points of social gathering. One of the Gallatly houses
in Philomath had a grove of trees behind it called "Gallatly
Grove" where people met for picnics and family reunions (Fig. 7).

Figure 6
Alpine House

Figure 7
Gallatly House

The country schools are almost as important to our informants as residences; according to the 1903 map, they must have been important historically too. The importance of schools is underestimated in the table, since many leads were not investigated. The old schools still serve a variety of uses. Some function as schools; many, like the Westwood schoolhouse, are used as residences (Fig. 8). A few are kept alive as community centers. The turn-of-the-century Soap Creek schoolhouse is well-maintained by local people (Fig. 9).

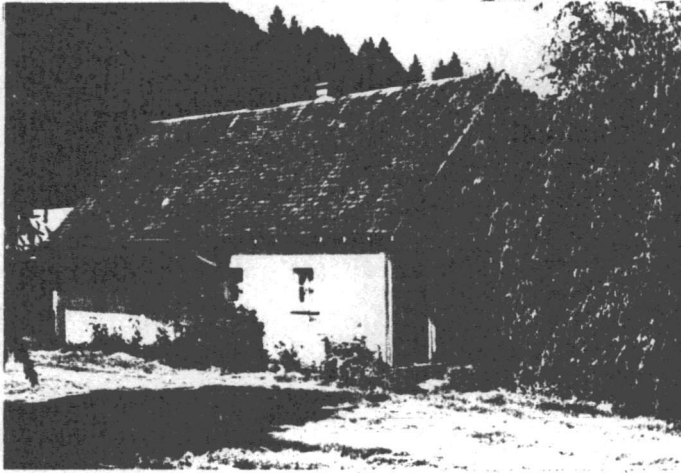The 1903 map shows few churches; perhaps most of the

Figure 8

Westwood School
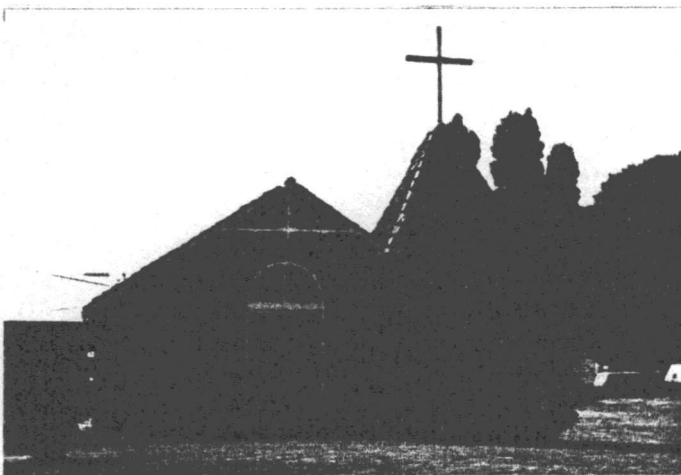

Figure 9

Soap Creek Schoolhouse

Figure 10

"Little Brown Church"

early structures were in Corvallis and Philomath. Although
churches are not considered eligible for inclusion in The
National Register, both Beckham and the local informants did
mention several.

Some churches have colorful histories. The "Little
Brown Church" (ca. 1910), located at the Benton County Fair-
grounds, was originally in downtown Corvallis (Fig. 10).
Later, it was moved to the banks of the Willamette River
and was used as a hay barn. With the help of T.J. Starker
and Jack Brandis, the church was moved to the fairgrounds,
where it is used as a church.

Cemeteries also are not National Register material.
Perhaps for this reason, none appears in the 1976 survey.
However, several pioneer cemeteries serve as connections to
the past for local residents. Pleasant Valley cemetery,
near the Gray farm, is cared for by the descendants of
pioneer families (Fig. 11).

Figure 11   Pleasant Valley Cemetery

The importance of transportation development in the county is confirmed by historical records, the 1903 map, and the two inventories.[13] The reliance on local residents to identify important sites turned up many historical transportation resources which might have been overlooked and lost forever. An interview with Janet Tunison and a walk on her family's farm revealed traces of the old nineteenth century wagon road, and Indian trail, to Alsea (Fig. 12). Above Highway 34 is the old Alsea highway, a gravel road used from 1905 to 1937 (Fig. 13). Also on the farm are hand dug irrigation ditches and wooden pipelines of the first Corvallis water system (Fig. 14).

Several informants mentioned the abandoned Valley and Siletz Railroad engine house at Hoskins, expected to be demolished soon. An interview with OSU professor Robert Lowry, a local expert on old railroads, led to documentation of the steam-driven belts and other machinery inside (Figs. 15, 16, and 17).

Some historic resources in the county are simple and dilapidated; they probably would not be noticed in a windshield survey. A residence across from the King's Valley Store was a medical office and pharmacy in the 1890s (Fig. 18). A residence in Philomath was the original jail (Fig. 19). These are examples of the many modest buildings cited by local residents and photographed for the inventory.
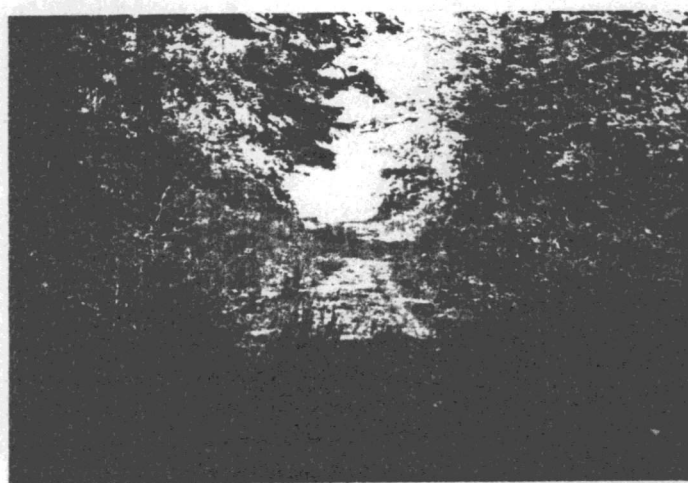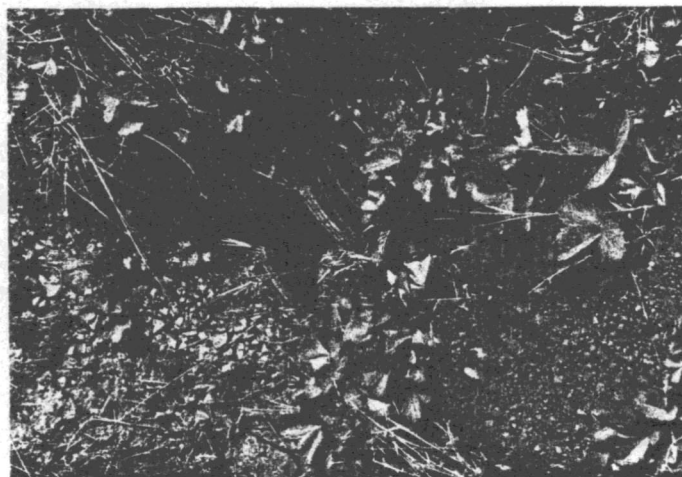
Figure 12
Wagon Road

Figure 13
Old Alsea Highway
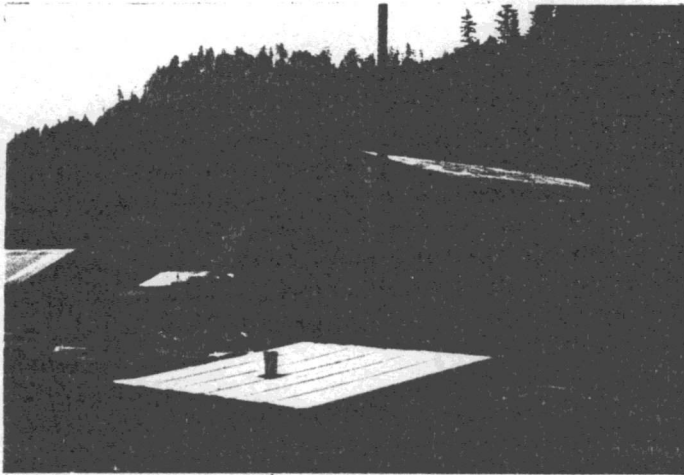

Figure 14
Water Pipes, Gray Farm

Figure 15
Engine House, Valley and
Siletz Railroad

Figure 16
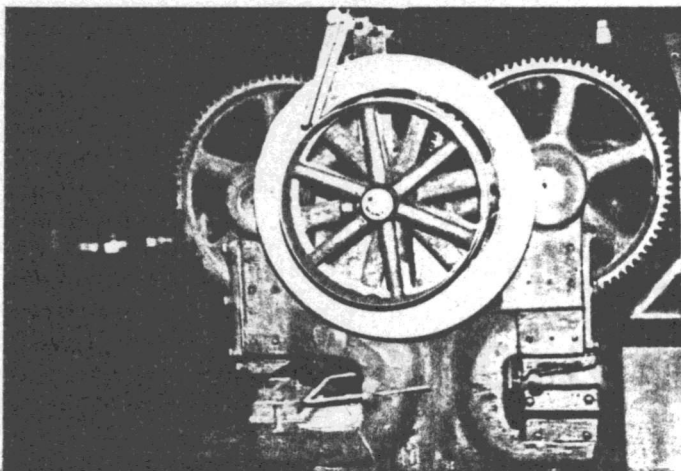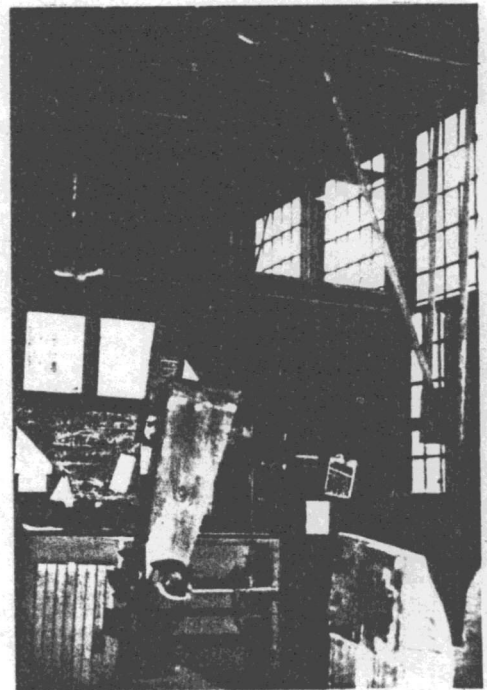Steam-driven belts, Engine House
Valley and Siletz Railroad

Figure 17
Detail of machinery, Engine
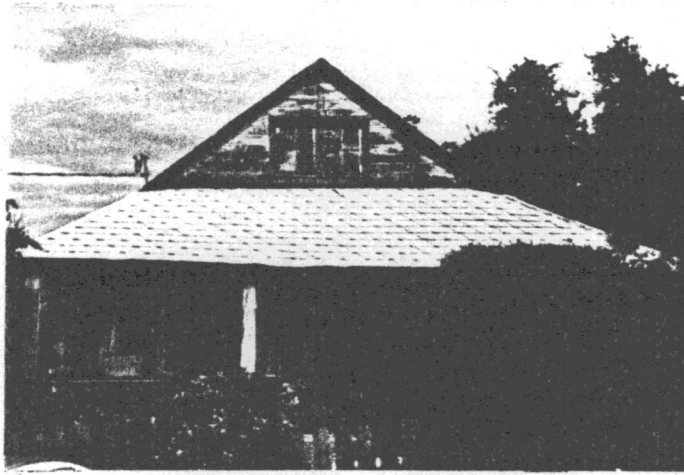House, Valley and Siletz
Railroad

Fig. 18   Medical office and pharmacy

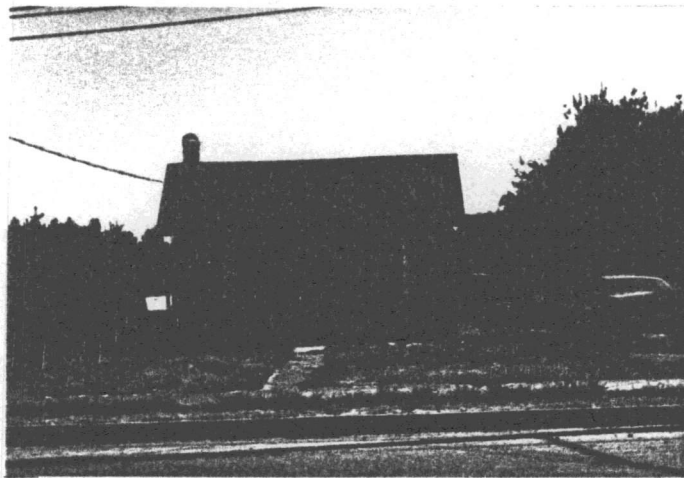Fig. 19   Philomath jail

DISCUSSION

The development of a network of local informants was a useful field technique for eliciting information about Benton County's historical resources. Compared with the literature search technique recommended by The National Register of Historic Places, network development does have advantages and disadvantages. The purpose of comparing information gathering techniques, however, is not to show which is better. The information from each complements the other. The question is which should come first or be given greater emphasis in land use planning. Since the preservation of any resource depends, in part, on its perceived importance, every effort should be made to involve the public in resource identification and to make it possible for interested citizens to influence the direction of preservation efforts.

Interest in the preservation of King's Valley Church is an excellent example of the importance of public participation (Fig. 20). This is a site that has been missed in previous surveys, yet it was one of the most enthusiastically supported resources of all that were encountered. King's Valley is a tiny community with little commercial activity, but many local residents are intent on restoring the church in order to have a community center. Grass roots efforts like this should be supported by planners.

An extensive literature search, such as Dr. Beckham performed, is necessary for detailed and accurate document-
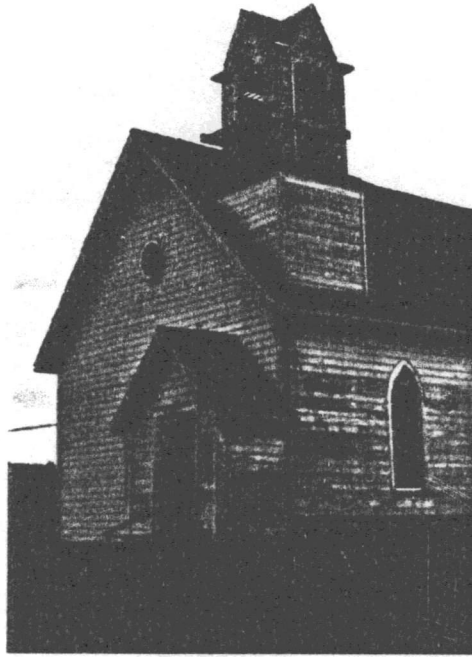
Fig. 20 King's Valley Church

ation of sites and buildings. Information obtained from
lay persons may be inaccurate or incomplete and must be
verified by written and photographic records. Further,
it is difficult to assess how representative of the general
population any informant network may be. For example, the
attitudes of architects, businessmen, and developers cannot
be ignored if a balanced concensus is to be achieved.
The literature search can provide a degree of objectivity,
although the Beckham study did show a bias toward urban
resources.

Consideration of citizen's rights presents a dilemma in
any approach to resource identification and documentation.
Photographing of private property and documentation are
inevitable in resource discovery, and this raises serious
questions with respect to privacy and disclosure. Political

implications of registering private homes as "historic
residences" arise; if a survey is publicly funded, the point
can be made that the results should be public information,
yet the right of every citizen to privacy is taken for
granted in a democratic society.

The problems of privacy, bias, and constraints of
administrative or funding agencies are inherent in any
resource inventory process. The proliferation of govern-
ment information about members of society makes it necessary
to reevaluate the moral obligations of researchers and
planners.

It is the position of this geographer that the perceptions
of local people must be integrated into resource planning
if we are to have a truly representative government "of
the people." A list of historical resources deemed to be
important by local residents should be compiled and,
except where property owners object, be made available to
the public. The sharing of inventory information raises
the group consciousness of identity with place. Thus, the
community may be aided in its efforts to preserve its
most beloved historical resources.

FOOTNOTES

1 Oregon State University, Department of Anthropology, "Cultural Resource Inventory, Benton County, Oregon," (Corvallis: August 1980) Vols. I and II (Mimeographed.)

2 Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission, "Statewide Planning Goals and Guidelines," adopted December 27, 1974.

3 National Register of Historic Places, "Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning," (Washington, D.C., 1977).

4 Op. cit., footnote number 2, LCDC

5 J. P. Huffman, Map of Benton County, 1903, Oregon State University Map Library.

6 William A. Bowen, The Willamette Valley: Migration and Settlement on the Oregon Frontier, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978) p. 43.

7 Mark Phinney, "Inventory of the County Archives of Oregon" No. 2, Benton County, prepared by the Oregon Historical Records Survey Service Division, Work Projects Administration, Portland, Oregon, 1942.

8 Phinney, op. cit., footnote 7, p. 70.

9 Not all of the buildings mentioned by informants are included on the 1980 map. Not shown are those needing further research or identification.

10 The first five interviews were actually group meetings. The initial meeting was with the staff from the Oregon State University Anthropology Department. Another of

Footnotes--continued

the meetings was organized by local King's Valley folk. The other three were public meetings held at Benton County Planning Department. Subsequent private inter-views frequently included more than one family member. More than once, the news of an interview attracted friends and relatives who listened and contributed information. All meetings, whether public or private, are referred to on the graphs as meetings.

11 Interview with Corvallis Chamber of Commerce on November 11, 1980. Figures are for December 1979.

12 Bureau of Municipal Research and Service, "Population of Oregon Cities, Counties, and Metropolitan Areas, 1850-1957," University of Oregon Information Bulletin no. 106, April 1958.

13 Phinney, op. cit., footnote 7, pp. 43-55.

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APPENDIX A

OUTLINE OF BENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL THEMES

I Indians

    Calapooia Family

        Chepenafa tribe

        Long Tom tribe

        Lakmuit tribe

    Klickitat invasion 1840s and 50s

    Dayton Treaty 1855

II Exploration

    Overland

    River

III Fur Trader Period

IV Pioneer Period (1845-1860)

    Gold rush period

V Early Settlement Groups

    Ethnic (e.g., Corvallis Chinatown)

    Religious

    Political

VI Agriculture

    Wheat farming

    Cattle and livestock

    Fruit

    Dairy and poultry

    Grass

VII Industry and Commerce

    Flour mills

    Canneries

Creameries

Farm implement manufacture

Furniture manufacture

Sawmills

General stores, taverns

Grist mills

Early newspapers

Blacksmiths

Carriage factory

Cigar factory

Boat building

VIII Transportation

Indian trails

Wagon trails

Early roads (military as well as civilian)

Ferry landings

Steamers

Railroads

Covered bridges

IX Institutions

Churches

Cemeteries

Schools

Government

Water systems (including towers and cisterns)

Post offices

Military, e.g., Fort Hoskins, Adair

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; dredging and

clearing on Willamette River

APPENDIX B

BUILDINGS INFORMANTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE PRESERVED

Soap Creek Schoolhouse, Tampico

Thomas Read House, near Lewisburg

Dunn House, near Hoskins

Watson House, near Hoskins (owner does not wish to be in inventory)

J.C. Avery Store (Robinettes), Corvallis

Southern Pacific Depot, Corvallis

Waldo Hall, Oregon State University

Benton Hall, Oregon State University

Philomath College, Philomath

Mt. View Apartments, Philomath

Robert Gallatly House, Philomath

Sheik House, Philomath

United Brethren Church, Philomath

Beaver Creek Schoolhouse, near Philomath

Hoskins Schoolhouse, Hoskins

Kings Valley Church, Kings Valley

Kings Valley Store, Kings Valley

Plunkett House, near Summit

Belknap House, Alpine

Sewall Hawley House, Alpine

Wilhelm House, Monroe

St. Rose Catholic Church, Monroe

Benton County Courthouse, Corvallis